THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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HD **Morning Update: Australia fires; Netanyahu seeks immunity; zero-waste lifestyle advice; Also: Thousands of Cubans join ranks of U.S. asylum seekers stuck in Mexico**

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Good morning and Happy New Year,

These are the top stories:

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Australia sending aid to towns ravaged by wildfires as death toll rises

Tens of thousands of holidaymakers fled seaside towns on Australia's east coast on Thursday ahead of advancing bushfires . Australia deployed military ships and aircraft yesterday to help communities ravaged by the wildfires that have left at least 17 people dead. Since Monday, eight people have been killed and 18 are still missing.

More than 175 homes have been destroyed in the region.

The leader of the minor Australian Greens party, Richard Di Natale, demanded a royal commission, the country's highest form of inquiry, on the wildfire crisis.

* Also read: Dozens of Canadian firefighting experts on ground in Australia

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Israeli Benjamin Netanyahu to seek parliamentary immunity from corruption charges

The immunity request is the latest twist in the political and legal drama that has paralyzed the Israeli government for nearly a year

It could delay for months the cases against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who faces a general election in two months. And if it is approved, immunity could keep him out of court for as long as he remains a member of parliament.

Netanyahu was indicted in November on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust. He has denied any wrongdoing.

How to start a zero-waste lifestyle the average Canadian can actually sustain

Ease your eco-anxiety: You can start small, a member of growing Canada's zero-waste community Kate Pepler says, and still make a difference.

The principles of the movement, in descending order of importance, are: refuse (to buy in the first place), reuse (what you already own), reduce (plastic packaging), rot (compost) and recycle.

We asked five zero-waste experts for advice on how the average chip-loving, Sephora-shopping Canadian can get started.

'You feel like you'll rot away': Thousands of Cubans join ranks of U.S. asylum seekers stuck in Mexico

For decades, Cuban migrants had been granted unique privileges. If they managed to make it to U.S. soil, they could be admitted without a visa and became eligible for permanent residency after just a year and a day.

Now without visa-free entry to the U.S., they must wait out the asylum process in Juarez as part of Trump administration protocols.

The Globe joined Gabriel Pascual Rodriguez 26, and his wife, Lisandra Benitez Oliva, 25, on their quest to get their case approved amid increasingly difficult odds.

Got a news tip that you'd like us to look into? E-mail us at tips@globeandmail.com Need to share documents securely? Reach out via SecureDrop

ALSO ON OUR RADAR

Former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn met Lebanon's President after fleeing Japan: One of the sources said Mr. Ghosn was greeted warmly by President Michel Aoun after flying into Beirut via Istanbul and now felt secure.

Federal government suspends popular immigration sponsorship program: The program normally opens for applications in January and allows people to sponsor their parents or grandparents to come to Canada.

Union representing refuellers at two main Montreal airports, Swissport to resume negotiations Thursday: Roughly 100 employees with Swissport Canada, walked off the job around 11 a.m. yesterday, several days after having voted to reject a tentative contract deal.

Airbus becomes world's largest plane maker, tops goal with 863 jet deliveries in 2019: Airbus deployed extra resources until hours before midnight to reach 863 aircraft for the year , compared with its revised target of 860 jets.

MORNING MARKETS

World stock markets began the new year with a shot of Chinese stimulus, ensuring there was no immediate hangover after the gains of 2019. In addition, U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted that a long-awaited Phase 1 trade pact with Beijing would be signed on Jan 15. Europe's main markets followed Asia higher in their first trading session of the new decade. France's CAC 40 rose 0.8 per cent in early trading, while Germany's DAX was little changed, inching down less than 0.1 per cent. Britain's FTSE 100 added 0.8 per cent.

WHAT EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

Modi's project to make a Hindu India won't strengthen the country

Ramesh Thakur: "Muslims now constitute a 180-million strong minority in India. If they become disaffected through state-sponsored policies of exclusion, the country would descend into bloodbath and break apart." Thakur is emeritus professor at the Australian National University and a former United Nations assistant secretary-general.

Anti-Semitic violence will always be shocking, but the perpetrator never will be

Robyn Urback: "But now, some Jews in the United States – in particular, Orthodox Jews in the New York area – are suffering from the same anxieties that have plagued European Jews for years, with random acts of anti-Semitic violence being reported on a near-daily basis."

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TODAY'S EDITORIAL CARTOON

NEW YEAR READS

2020 movie preview: The 10 most intriguing, under-the-radar films to watch out for

For those who wish to escape the grinding gears of the franchise machine, there is hope. If you know where to look. Presenting 10 of 2020′s most intriguing , under-the-radar films.

Experts warn Canadians to brace for a new era of cyberthreats

Even before the LifeLabs incident, most Canadians – more than 28 million – were affected by 680 breaches between Nov. 1, 2018, and October, 2019, according to the federal privacy commissioner.

These trends of the past decade made investors smarter and richer, and they can do the same in the 2020s

Investors have never had a better decade than the 2010s. A decade of competition, innovation and regulation has brought lower costs, more choice and more transparency to individual investors. Let's look at some of the highlights .

MOMENT IN TIME

First spacecraft to reach the vicinity of the moon

Jan. 2, 1959: The mission was to be the first human object to reach the moon by smashing itself into the surface, scattering metallic spheres with Soviet emblems on them. The United States, still reeling from the success of Sputnik in 1957, was not keen for more Soviet propaganda, but the scientific data from this mission would prove invaluable for future space scientists everywhere. On Jan. 2, 1959, a spacecraft called the Cosmic Rocket (it was renamed Luna in 1963) left Earth with a number of scientific experiments, among them measuring the temperature and pressure inside the spaceship and releasing sodium gas in order to study the behaviour of gas in space. As it hurtled toward the moon, it became the first human-made object to escape Earth's gravity, and the first to reach the vicinity of the moon, as well as making the first observations of solar wind. In what would be commonplace in space exploration, there was a mishap; its upper stage rocket fuel burn was incorrectly timed. The spacecraft sailed by the moon and into history as the first human object to orbit the Sun, where it remains today. Nine months later, Luna 2 was successfully obliterated on the moon. - Graeme Harris

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